

Style Sheet for Music Papers

Front Range Community College – Larimer Campus

The goal of this style sheet for the music program is to specifically address some of the most commonly asked questions when “writing about music” and to discuss some of the common music citations using MLA format.

Format Issues Related to “Writing About Music”

Historical Style Periods

It is standard practice to capitalize the terms we use for historical period - thus, the Baroque era, the Classical period, the Romantic period. We do this to distinguish these terms from the same words used in their general senses, in usages such as "those baroque decorations," "classical music" (as opposed to popular music), or "the lyrical romanticism of a Mozart aria." Terms such as neoclassicism, impressionism, and expressionism, since they represent styles rather than specific periods of history, are not capitalized.

Referring to Musical Works

Musical works with specific titles, such as *Messiah*, *Marriage of Figaro*, or *Symphonie Fantastique*, are easy to cite; like book titles, they are put in italics, and the writer must follow the capitalization rules of the language of the title. Things get more problematic in the case of generic titles, particularly when they also have subtitles, opus numbers, and catalog numbers, and there are several options for the ordering of all those elements. Following are some of the questions that arise when referring to musical works.

Italics or quotation marks

In general, italics are used for titles of works; individual numbers or movements of larger works are put in quotation marks.

"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" from *Messiah*

"Come scoglio" from *Così fan tutte*

Generic Titles

Generic titles are not set in italic type. Generic terms are, however, capitalized when they are part of a title and left as lowercase words when they are NOT part of a specific title. Thus:

The Fourth String Quartet is the last quartet that Bartok wrote.

Sometimes there are several ways to list a title; the proper procedure is to cite the title exactly the way it appears in a reliably scholarly edition. For example, here are several ways to name the same well-known work.

Piano Concerto in C Minor, K. 491

Concerto no. 20 for Pianoforte and Orchestra in C Minor, K. 491

Concerto in C Minor for Piano and Orchestra, K. 491

Opus Numbers

If numbers are included in the citation of a musical composition, the terms "op." (for "opus") and "no." are usually not capitalized.

Sonata op. 31, no. 3

Naming Notes and Keys

In normal prose, musical notes or keys should be capitalized; this practice is necessary to distinguish notes from ordinary works, so that we avoid ambiguous sentences like "Chopin composed his Prelude in a flat."

Sonata in C Minor

Prelude and Fugue in E Major

Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor

Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C-sharp Minor

MLA Citation in Music Sources

The Music Program at FRCC uses MLA Citation for your writing and papers requiring sources. Please refer to MLA Style sheets at FRCC WAC website for specific help in this documentation style.

Citation for a Groves Music article (on-line)

Author. "Article", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed [Day Month Year of access]), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

For example:

O.W. Neighbour. "Schoenberg, Arnold", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 5 October 2001), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

If you wish to cite material from the print edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, please use the following format:

Author. "Article", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ed. S. Sadie and J. Tyrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), volume, page nos.

For example:

O.W. Neighbour. "Schoenberg, Arnold", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie and J. Tyrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), xxii, 577-604

MLA – Musical Score Examples

Beethoven, Ludwig van. "Sonata No. 3 in D Major." Sonatas for Piano. Ed. Hans Bishoff. New York: Norton, 1980. 123-145.

Bach, Johann Sebastian. Violin Concerto in B Minor, BWV 1036. 1738. New York: Dover, 2002.

MLA – Musical Recordings Examples

Beethoven, Ludwig van. Beethoven Piano Sonatas Nos 3-6. Perf. Alfred Brendel. EMI, 2002.

Bach, Johann Sebastian. Bach: Violin Concertos. Cond. Trevor Pinnock. English Chamber Orchestra. Sony, 2004.

Telemann, Georg Philippe. "Sonata in G Minor." The Soulful Bach and Telemann. Olde Friends Concert Artists. CD. Centaur Records, 2003.

Kilcher, Jewel. "Amen." Pieces of You. A&R, 1994.

Grieg, Edvard. Concerto in A-minor, op.16. Cond. Eugene Ormandy. Philadelphia Orch. LP. RCA, 1989.